



*Question selected from District letters and emails received from the public.*

**Q** A South Florida Water Management District canal runs behind the house I just purchased. Can I build a chickee hut on the land close to the canal?

**A** Yes, but only if you invite me to all of your parties! Seriously, compatible uses of the District's maintenance "right of way" on land adjacent to a District canal are allowed for homeowners. Right of Way permitting rules govern these uses. Some uses are exempt from the need to obtain an individual permit while others require a permit. District permitting rules require that above-ground structures and plantings be set back a minimum of 40 feet from the top of the canal bank. But every situation is different.

To discuss whether you can build a chickee hut, call District headquarters at (561) 686-8800 and ask for the Right of Way Division. Our friendly staff can address your particular situation. But first, be sure the canal is, indeed, a South Florida Water Management District canal: There are primary canals maintained by the District and secondary canals maintained by local municipalities. Our Right of Way permitting staff can help you with the permit application process if one is required (fees may apply). But please, don't serve gator tail at your parties!



## ANSWER TO FIND FREDDY

### Biscayne Bay, Miami-Dade County

*Freddy is visiting the Biscayne Bay, which runs the entire length of Miami-Dade County. The bay is part of Biscayne National Park, and since 95 percent of the park is covered by water, the best way to get to know it is to get wet.*

*Over the years, water quality has declined in the bay, and two projects included in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan will help restore it. The Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project, Phase I and the C-111 Spreader Canal will be fast-tracked under the Acceler8 initiative to achieve ecological restoration goals sooner. For additional information, visit [www.evergladesnow.org](http://www.evergladesnow.org)*

## Flocking Together to See Birds in the Everglades

Bird-watching may seem to be all about watching.

But there's a lot to be learned by listening, too – and not just to the birds. The bird-watchers themselves provide plenty of interest and information, as they did during a recent tour sponsored by the South Florida Water Management District:

"He's flying like an osprey."

"Too slow for a gull."

"Did you see the Caspian tern?"

"I heard it but I didn't see it."

"Got a red-tailed hawk again."

"About 40,000 anhingas are in that tree if you're interested."

Like a field guide on audiotape, the birders point out everything of avian interest, talking among themselves to discuss dozens of details. From body size, feather color and wing span to flying style, chirps, squawks and other fine points, experienced birders seem to know it all. For a novice along for the ride, a two-hour outing to an Everglades wetland is like an intensive tutorial in ornithology: Birding 101.

### STA-1 WEST, STA-5 BIRDING ACTIVITIES

Bird-watching tours are one of the benefits of the District's recreation policy, which encourages public use on District lands where possible. Birders have been pleased with the recent, limited opening of two specialized wetlands called Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs): STA-1 West in Palm Beach County and STA-5 in Hendry County. Participants report an impressive list of interesting, unusual or simply beautiful birds. A sampling of the many species identified

during a November outing to STA-5 includes bald eagle, peregrine falcon (observed striking an American coot in mid-air), northern harrier, roseate spoonbill, wood stork and a great variety of ducks, herons and egrets. The birds' tolerance for close, extended observation has been described as impressive.

### PROTECTING THE LAND'S INTENDED USE

Long-term public access plans are now under development for all the STAs, and understandably, interest is high to see wildlife in areas where human presence has been minimal for more than a decade. However, recreation in the STAs must necessarily be restricted to activities that do not impair their purpose, which is to cleanse water flowing into the Everglades. These shallow, constructed wetlands contain vegetation and sediments that retain phosphorus, a pollutant to the Everglades ecosystem. Their role in Everglades restoration is a vital one.

With the help of public input, the broad-based STA recreational use plan will be ready later this year. In the meantime, STA-1 West and STA 5 are being used for organized bird-watching trips and waterfowl hunts (in season, under supervision by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission).

You can learn more by visiting the District's web site, [www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov) and clicking on the link "Info & Education." The option "Recreation/Public Land Use" provides maps, guidelines and other details on recreational use of District lands.

## ESCORTED BIRD-WATCHING TRIPS OFFERED



Anhinga

*Because of strong interest in the vast numbers of birds attracted to STA wetlands, escorted bird-watching trips are now scheduled on a monthly basis. To sign up for upcoming trips:*

### STA-1 West

**Jan. 29, Feb. 5, March 12, March 19, April 9, April 16**

Call the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge visitor center at (561) 734-8303 or (561) 735-6030 or send an email to [Lois\\_Chapman@fws.gov](mailto:Lois_Chapman@fws.gov). Provide your name and contact information, the date you want to go and the number in your party.

### STA-5

**Feb. 6, Feb. 12, March 12, March 19, April 9, April 16**

Send an e-mail to [tas007@tropicalaudubon.org](mailto:tas007@tropicalaudubon.org) with your name and contact information, the date you want to go and the number in your party. You may also leave a message at (305) 388-1544.

## CREDITS

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*The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.*

*Our mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply.*

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